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Transition Plan for Victim Assistance Activities and Mine Risk Education:
Inter-ministerial Task Force for Disability Awareness, Advocacy and Prevention
UNMACA Proposal
7 November 2006

Background/Context:

The wars in Afghanistan have many victims, people in need facing physical, social, economic and psychological problems that involve their families and the whole of Afghan society. During 25 years of war in Afghanistan, the breakdown of medical and social infrastructures left many ill or disabled due to lack of prevention and treatment facilities. The National Disability Survey of Afghanistan estimates that at least 2.7% of the population (approximately 750,000 people) is severely disabled¹. This number continues to grow as landmine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) still contaminate vast amounts of the country. This number also is large and exemplifies a critical need for physical and social rehabilitation programmes and continued prevention efforts throughout Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has entered a new phase with strengthen governmental interest in disability giving way to new possibilities, new people and organizations, new means, new prospects and with that, new challenges. Disability remains a complex issue in all countries. In Afghanistan, the complexities are exacerbated by the paucity or low quality of services within all areas of assistance including health care, social services, education and human rights. Lack of access to emergency services and health centers in remote areas along with the lack of equipment, medicines, training for health and rehabilitation personnel, and funding often prevent disabled persons from receiving the care and rehabilitation services they need to survive and integrate into society. Coordination is paramount, partnering with government essential to build national capacities and create the structures and communication mechanisms necessary for persons with disabilities to obtain their rightful place in Afghan society.

The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan under the coordination body of the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA) is beginning to transition its Mine Risk Education and Victim Assistance activities to national implementation and operational management. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan through the support of the UNMACA finalized the *Mine Action in Afghanistan: The Way Forward*² document (see annex A) in May 2006 that outlines the end-state goals for mine action and the transition to national ownership through SMART³ objectives in line with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the Millennium Development Goals. More recently and in response to the Afghanistan government's obligations to the Mine Ban Treaty, the UNMACA supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the relevant disability sector actors including other ministry partners to develop SMART objectives and a draft plan of action called *Addressing the rights and needs of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities: The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's objectives and plan of action for the period of 2006-2009*⁴ (see annex B). This

¹ Chapter one: Prevalence of Disability in Afghanistan, National Disability Survey for Afghanistan, Handicap International, 2005.

² This report was drafted through a consultative process of relevant mine action actors including government, implementing partners, UNMACA, UNMAS and UNDP.

³ SMART objectives are those considered to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound.

⁴ This report was drafted through a consultative process of over 90 stakeholder including 9 ministries during the First National Victim Assistance Workshop held 6-8 August 2006 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kabul,

action plan known as the Kabul Report outlines the objectives for all relevant ministries and was presented to the 7th Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention in September 2006 and many of the objectives set forth have been placed within the benchmarks for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)⁵ & ⁶ framework

Key Ministries have been identified as logical implementers of a variety of activities within the disability sector including prevention initiatives such as MRE and should be encouraged to take ownership of the activities outlined. These same ministries are key stakeholders in the public health and safety of the Afghan citizenry and together share responsibility to ensure all preventative measures that can eliminate disabling conditions are carried out.

Afghanistan still has more than 716 km² of suspected mined land and an additional 450 km² of land thought to be contaminated by explosive remnants of war (ERW), making it one of the most landmines and ERW affected countries in the world.⁷ Over 2300 communities face the daily dangers of these indiscriminate weapons. The use of mines has been one of the most violent expressions of the past conflicts in Afghanistan. Today, despite the efforts of the international community to mitigate the impact of landmines and ERW on the Afghan population, the number of mine victims recorded remains over 50 per month.

Years of war in Afghanistan have left a legacy of landmines, malnutrition, poor health conditions and inadequate health care. The large number of affected people and the problems they face in daily life activities represents a significant challenge for Afghan people. Discriminatory practices and prejudiced attitudes render disability even more handicapping, making persons with disabilities increasingly vulnerable and further at risk to poverty conditions.

Within the context of a transitioning mine action programme and its obligations to the Mine Ban Treaty, the Government of Afghanistan must continue to provide Mine Risk Education (MRE) and must begin to respond to the needs of disabled persons. The Government needs to ensure balanced approaches to mine action activities providing education and disability services targeting the most vulnerable in creative and resource saving ways. This will ensure people throughout Afghanistan are reached and those with disabilities are provided equal access to health, education, and economic opportunities.

It is within the above-mentioned documents that the Ministries of Martyrs, Disabled and Social Affairs (MMDSA), Education (MoE), Public Health (MoPH) and Information and Culture (MoIC) will find their responsibilities. These responsibilities can include protection and prevention, advocacy and awareness activities, and the development and implementation of policy and legislation. These key ministries are well positioned to work together and with the UNMACA assisting with the transition process by building into their infrastructures the capacity to monitor progress of disability and MRE activities within Afghanistan including

Afghanistan. The report was submitted to the 7th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty (Ottawa Convention) in September 2006.

⁵ Social Protection Working Group: Disability Benchmark: By end-2010, increased assistance will be provided to meet the special needs of all persons with disability, including their integration in society through opportunities of education and gainful employment.

⁶ Security Working Group: Mine Action Benchmark for Mine Risk Education: Relevant Government Ministries identify appropriate and specific MRE activities and develop action plans for implementation of these MRE activities within their programme planning and NDSA budgets by end of 2006

⁷ Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan Annual Report for the period of 1385 (1 April 2004 through 31 March 2005).

the obligations to the Mine Ban Treaty, providing needed information and resources to ensure service delivery and integrated approaches, and encourage the Government of Afghanistan to ratify international treaties and create public policies for the enhancement of human rights for all people.

Disability issues cross all social sectors including health, education, employment, and communication. All people with disability including those disabled by landmines and ERW share the issues of stigmatization, exclusion, lack of employment and education opportunity and health problems. The Government of Afghanistan in compliance with the Mine Ban Treaty has the mandate to ensure that Mine Risk Education continues as long as the mine threat exists and that all people with disabilities are fully reintegrated into Afghan society. The Mine Ban Treaty (Ottawa Treaty) states in article 6 section 3 the following:

Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims and for mine awareness programmes.⁸

Recognizing this obligation and advocating for these goals to be fully realized, the Government of Afghanistan can unite key ministries by creating a task force on MRE and Disability to build public health and safety mechanisms for continued awareness raising with regards to the threats for landmines and ERW and capitalize on the powerful voice of landmine survivors as strong advocates for the rights and dignity of all people with disability. It is with this in mind that this project aims to enhance inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination to integrate MRE into national public health and safety programmes and national education activities and advocate for inclusive and expanded service provision, disability policy development, provide information and resources for implementation and to ensure access to all educational, employment and social opportunities that facilitate the integration of people with disabilities fully into Afghan society according to their human rights.

Inter-ministerial Task Force Proposal

The formation of an inter-ministerial task force is the first step towards ensuring that the Government of Afghanistan takes responsibility for ensuring Mine Risk Education and disability awareness and advocacy activities are implemented throughout the country and through Government approved mechanisms. The four key ministries identified for this task force project offer a wealth of expertise in health, safety, advocacy, education and mass communication systems. Working together, these ministries can ensure cooperative and coordinated communication and education programmes that will enhance their capacities to alert the public to health and safety issues, provide education to children and families for awareness raising and encouraging safe behaviors, and most importantly promote social change and advocate for barrier free access and inclusive attitudes thus ensuring the rights of all people but in particular for those persons with disabilities. The cross cutting nature of disability and outreach mechanisms required for the dissemination of information whatever the message may be, requires this type of multi sector approach capitalizing on the expertise from a variety of sources.

⁸ Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction: Article 6, Section 3.

DRAFT 4/5/2007

The UNMACA wishes to support the inter-ministerial task force through the expertise of its national and international staff who have skills and proficiencies in the areas of mine action and disability advocacy, international treaty implementation, legislation development, mine risk education, education curriculum development, teacher training and peer education, disability social work, injury and mine action field epidemiology, communications development, design and production, data collection and survey techniques, community mobilization and awareness experience, training development and implementation, and first aid training, along with financial, operational and logistical planning and implementation capacities.

It is through this inter-ministerial task force and partnership that these key ministries and the UNMACA can begin the transition of national ownership of mine risk education and victim/disability assistance and advocacy while building the institutional frameworks and capacities to deliver vital public health and safety messages, implement national awareness raising activities and advocate for human rights. Together these ministries can reach out and provide the people of Afghanistan with vital information that will help communities and individuals live safer, healthier, barrier free and happier lives.

Inter-ministerial Task Force Goal:

- To build an institutional capacity within the key ministries of MMDSA, MOE, MOPH, and MOIC and other relevant ministries to provide public health and safety messages including those of landmines and ERW, gather and disseminate relevant information and data, and advocate for and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities.

Objectives:

- Awareness Raising: To raise awareness with regards to disability and the challenges faced by people with disability including the barriers to inclusion and participation in all sectors of Afghan society.
- Advocacy: To advocate for rights based and inclusive programme development and implementation through national policy development, legislation, and technical assistance.
- Prevention: To lessen preventable disabilities through education, public health and safety mechanism and mass communications.

Activities:

1. Establish Inter-ministerial Task Force:
 - Establish partnership relations among the four key ministries.
 - Recruit focal points within each key ministry to fulfill taskforce duties and responsibilities.
 - Draft and finalize for approval of key ministers, a TOR for each task force member.
 - Draft and finalize for approval of key ministers, a TOR for the task force.
 - Establish funding mechanism if required.

2. Activity Work Plan:

- Based on the MRE needs and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, develop a detailed work plan for national activities within Public Health and Safety and Disability Advocacy and Awareness.
 - Advocacy activities
 - ♦ International Day for Disabled Persons
 - ♦ Other advocacy activities (International Conventions, national legislation, etc.)
 - ♦ Press and media opportunities
 - Public Health and Safety Programme
 - ♦ Inter-ministerial prevention activities
 - ♦ Campaign development
 - Training plan for ministry personnel
 - ♦ Central and Regional activities
 - Schools Programme
 - ♦ Teacher Training
 - Non-formal Schools
 - Formal Schools
 - Distance Training Development
 - ♦ Curriculum development and inclusion
 - ♦ Training of Administration staff, School Principals, and Protection Staff

3. Awareness Raising:

- Training for Key ministry staff
 - Typologies and challenges faced by each
 - Responsibility of government to persons with disability
 - Need for legislation and national policy
 - Monitoring mechanisms for the ANDS
 - Treaty Obligations: CRC, MBT, ICPHR, Others
 - Afghan Constitution
- Training for Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga commission members
 - Typologies and challenges faced by each
 - Responsibility of government to persons with disability
 - Need for legislation and national policy
 - Monitoring mechanisms for the ANDS
- Training for non-key ministry staff: Ministries of Commerce, Public Works, Interior, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Women's Affairs, Religious Affairs, Foreign Affairs and others, central and regional.

4. Advocacy

- National Policy Development
- Legislation Development (advisement only, information collections, survey)
- International Day of Disability
 - Press/Mass Communications
 - Inclusion of DPOs
 - Sporting Events
 - Workshop, Conference or Events
- Support to Special Olympics Afghanistan & Para-Olympics Afghanistan
- Mass Media Campaigns

DRAFT 4/5/2007

- Information gathering and dissemination: Service provision

5. Prevention:

- Ministry of Martyrs, Disabled and Social Affairs
 - Technical Advice for Disability Issues
 - Task Force Secretariat
 - Monitoring and reporting
- Ministry of Public Health:
 - Public Health and Safety Programme development, calendar of prevention to include regular MRE messages. Using this mechanism to develop an institutionalized prevention programme linking MOPH with other concerned ministries and their mechanisms of communications to support national coverage and initiatives.
- Ministry of Education
 - Teacher Training, distant learning opportunities, formal and non-formal schools.
- Ministry of Information and Culture
 - Mass Communications
 - Media relations,
 - Shura activities
 - Community activities
- Relevant partners: NGO and DPO participation in activity development as required and implementation when requested.

Regional activities:

Guided by UNMACA AMAC VA-MRE focal points, regional and provincial government focal points will be identified to sit on disability task force groups throughout the country and in particular those areas where UNMACA has offices. Personnel from every provincial key ministry should be included within these working groups to ensure strong provincial representation.

Activities:

1. Establish Task Force
 - Develop TOR for regional Task Forces and focal points.
 - Identify members and establish Task Force Groups by end of 2007 in each region and in some provinces.
 - Develop a plan of action for regional and provincial objectives based on the national plan.
2. Awareness Raising:
 - Focal points to participate in disability and MRE training activities
 - Training for Key ministry staff
 - Typologies and challenges faced by each
 - Responsibility of government to persons with disability
 - Need for legislation and national policy
 - Monitoring mechanisms for the ANDS
 - Treaty Obligations: CRC, MBT, ICPHR, Others
 - Afghan Constitution

- Training for non-key ministry staff: Ministries of Commerce, Public Works, Interior, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Women's Affairs, Religious Affairs, Foreign Affairs and others, central and regional
3. Advocacy:
- Participate in IDDP
 - Lead activities within the province
 - Support SOA and POA
 - Assist with the distribution of materials and mass communication activities
 - Coordinate awareness training with other ministries and relevant personnel.
 - Gather information and maintain database for service provision.
 - Distribute information as required.
 - Advocate for accessible services and public spaces
4. Prevention:
- Participate in Public Health and Safety activities and campaigns
 - Help identify new issues of concern for disability prevention and monitor indicators
 - Suggest regional/provincial activities based on special circumstances or requests from regional and provincial ministry, government and community needs.

The UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA) proposes a collaborative partnership among the key ministries designated above and jointly implemented 2-year programme to elaborate a detailed plan of action and benchmarks based on the concepts outline above and the ANDS benchmark for Disability, the *Mine Action in Afghanistan: The Way Forward* framework and the *Addressing the rights and needs of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities: The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's objectives and plan of action for the period of 2006-2009*. This inter-ministerial partnership will develop and institutionalize a national capacity to implement advocacy, policy and legislative development and monitoring, awareness raising and information dissemination.

The UNMACA will provide the technical supports for the integration of these programme activities into the institutional supports to the key ministries to ensure sustainability and long term programme goals. These programme goals will work towards the institutionalization of disability issues within all government programmes and ministerial responsibility. Additionally these goals will further the completion of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, London Compact and Millennium Development Goals while building the institutional systems to carry on beyond these planning processes.

Collaboration with additional ministries, NGOs, DPOs and technical staff from other agencies will be essential to ensure that these programme activities grow beyond these initial mine action proposals and are embedded within the frameworks and responsibilities of the Government of Afghanistan. Collaboration will also ensure initiatives are well developed and appropriately targeted among the Afghan populations thus ensuring programme activities are supported through intergovernmental structures such as health networks, schools and community based activities.

The activities proposed above are only some of the potential activities for these inter-ministerial task forces for central and regional. As the task forces gain expertise and strength, the development of other initiatives will be incorporated as required.